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Channels open even as US, Iran publicly trade barbs

• Tehran confirms contact with US envoy; both sides accuse each other of 'duplicity' • White House 'weighing military strikes'; Iran says 'more prepared than ever' for war • Iranian embassy in Islamabad blames US, Israel for foreign-backed violence • Foreign organisations estimate hundreds of casualties in unrest; Iranian capital witnesses huge pro-govt demo

DUBAI: Amid simmering tensions and widespread protests in Iran, Tehran and Washington kept "communication channels open" on Monday, even as leaders from both sides ramped up rhetoric about possible military action.

Foreign sources claimed that several people had been killed in the unrest currently sweeping Iran, as authorities sought to regain control of the streets with mass nationwide rallies.

US President Donald Trump is due to meet with senior advisers on Tuesday to discuss options for Iran, a US official told *Reuters*.

'Pakistan airspace not being used by US against Iran': Page 3

Opposition grows in US Congress to Iran action: Page 10

The Wall Street Journal reported that the options included military strikes, using secret cyber weapons, widening sanctions and providing online help to anti-government sources.

Due to a country-wide internet blackout, reports based on information or videos trickling out of Iran remained scant and hard to verify. While foreign-based NGOs

Continued on Page 11

(CLOCKWISE from top left) Tear gas is used against demonstrators amidst a protest in the Iranian capital; an expat shouts slogans during an anti-government rally in London; and, mourners accompany a funeral procession for people said to have been killed in violence over the weekend, in Tehran.—Reuters / AFP

Students, pilgrims make trek back to Pakistan

By Behram Baloch and Saleem Shahid

GWADAR/QUETTA: Amid violent protests in various parts of Iran, dozens of Pakistanis studying in different universities and religious education institutions and on pilgrimage to the holy sites in Iran have started returning to Pakistan via Gwadar.

Officials said over a hundred students and pilgrims entered Pakistan through Gabad-250 border

Continued on Page 11

Govt walks back 'unapproved' ordinance after PPP protestations

• Party members walk out of NA over promulgation of SEZ ordinance 'without president's assent' • Law minister says move withdrawn, insists PML-N enjoys cordial ties with PPP; blames error on 'e-filing system' • NA speaker formally starts process for opposition leader's appointment, asks lawmakers for nominations

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: After the PPP walked out of the National Assembly to protest an ordinance allegedly passed without the approval of President Asif Ali Zardari, the PML-N government retracted the said legislation that had brought both partners face-to-face in parliament.

The matter of the controversial legislation was pointed out by PPP lawmaker Naveed Qamar in the National Assembly, saying his party would not attend the proceedings till the issue was resolved, forcing the speaker to eventually adjourn the session after a PPP lawmaker pointed out the lack of quorum.

The PPP parliamentary party meeting was also summoned on Tuesday (today) ahead of the session to formu-

New ordinance set to further delay LG polls in Islamabad: Page 4

late its strategy regarding the 'grave anomaly' concerning the legislation on special economic zones. However, by Monday night, the government withdrew the contentious law 'Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Ordinance 2026' under Article 89(2)(b) of the Constitution.

In a statement, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar confirmed the withdrawal and blamed the mistake on the 'e-filing' system. He said under the e-office system, files were approved online and apparently, this was also marked approved. However, the ordinance did not have a signature when the files were received, he said, stressing that the government wanted to resolve issues amicably via dialogue.

Following his admission and the reversal, the PPP also called off its boycott.

Speaking about the ordinance, Mr

Continued on Page 11

Law enforcers 'still in the dark' on TLP leaders' whereabouts

By Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: Despite the passage of about three months, law enforcement agencies (LEAs) remain in the dark about the whereabouts of Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) chief Saad Hussain Rizvi and his brother Anas Rizvi.

The issue resurfaced a couple of days ago, after an alleged statement attributed to the proscribed religious outfit surfaced, claiming that both were "in the custody of agencies".

However, senior law enforcement officials are sticking to their earlier stance, maintaining that the two are hiding somewhere in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). They said the Rizvi brothers had fled on the day the Punjab police launched a pre-dawn operation in Muridke to dismantle the TLP protest camp along G.T. Road.

"I give you my word that they are not in the custody of any security agency and are still in AJK. They are most likely sheltered by a loyal worker of the banned

Continued on Page 5

ON OTHER PAGES

Rare reaction after Trump's move on Fed

Markets recoiled after the Trump administration opened a criminal probe into Fed Chair Jerome Powell, stoking fears of political interference in monetary policy. Long-term US Treasury yields rose as investors priced in risks to Fed independence, inflation control, and policy credibility. The bond market's reaction could ultimately limit Trump's leverage over the Fed.
Page 9

7 policemen martyred in Tank, D.I. Khan attacks

• Passerby also loses life as IED blast targets SHO, five policemen in Tank • Elite Force constable, cousin slain in D.I. Khan shooting • Three cops injured in Lakki attack; four terrorists killed in Bannu, Lakki operations

By Muhammad Irfan Mughal

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: At least nine people — seven police officials and two civilians — lost their lives in terrorist attacks in Tank and Dera Ismail Khan districts, officials said on Monday.

A police official said SHO Gomal police station Ishaq Ahmad Khan, five other policemen were martyred when an improvised explosive device (IED) targeted an armoured personnel carrier (APC) in Tank's Gomal area, about 25km from Kot Wali. He added the powerful explosion completely destroyed the police vehicle and also claimed the life of a passer-by.

PA speaker seeks in-camera briefing on military operations in merged areas: Page 8

Rescue 1122 teams rushed to the scene soon after the incident

Continued on Page 5

JCP confirms IHC additional judges, despite opposition

• One BHC judge also confirmed, another rejected; commission to decide SHC judges' fate today • Justice Kayani questions competence of fellow judges

By Nasir Iqbal and Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) confirmed the appointment of three ad-hoc judges currently performing their duties at the Islamabad High Court despite a letter by JCP member and IHC senior puisne judge Mohsin Akhtar Kayani questioning the competence of his colleagues.

The JCP meeting at the Supreme Court, chaired by the chief justice of Pakistan, considered the names of Justice Mohammad Azam Khan, Justice Mohammad Asif, and Justice Raja Inaam Ameen Minhas from the IHC and Justice Najamuddin Mengal and Justice Ayub Khan from the BHC. Except for Justice Ayub Khan, all judges were cleared.

In his letter to the CJP and the IHC chief justice, Justice Kayani, who is also a JCP member, opposed the confirmation of his colleagues. Sources said that the judge labelled the fellow judges as 'incompetent' and objected to their confirmation. They said the senior puisne judge had sought the record of these judges from the high court, but the progress reports were not shared with him.

He subsequently received this information from the JCP Secretariat, and the record provided by the secretariat formed the basis of his letter. During the meeting, the JCP discussed the contents of the letter as well as measures to regulate the provision of judges' records to the JCP members.

During the meeting, the hit-and-run accident involving Justice Asif's son also came up. The judge had found himself embroiled in a controversy

Continued on Page 5

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Best-Performing Asia-Pacific Bank Stocks in 2025 Dec. 31, 2025

Company (ticker-exchange)	Headquarters	Market cap (US$B)	Total return (%)
The Bank of Punjab (BOP-KASE)	Pakistan	0.45	333.8
National Bank of Pakistan (NBP-KASE)	Pakistan	1.84	301.3
Askari Bank Ltd. (AKBL-KASE)	Pakistan	0.52	194.2
Bank of Khyber (BOK-KASE)	Pakistan	0.14	177.4
Tochigi Bank Ltd. (8550-TSE)	Japan	0.48	165.6
Ogaki Kyoritsu Bank Ltd. (8361-TSE)	Japan	1.25	151.0
United Bank Ltd. (UBL-KASE)	Pakistan	3.80	143.7
Hokuhoku Financial Group Inc. (8377-TSE)	Japan	3.56	143.2
Yamanashi Chuo Bank Ltd. (8360-TSE)	Japan	0.79	124.2
Bank Makramah Ltd. (BML-KASE)	Pakistan	0.14	119.6
Keiyo Bank Ltd. (8544-TSE)	Japan	1.28	118.9
Miyazaki Bank Ltd. (8393-TSE)	Japan	0.70	117.6
Oita Bank Ltd. (8392-TSE)	Japan	0.63	117.6
Faysal Bank Ltd. (FABL-KASE)	Pakistan	0.50	115.1
PT Bank Neo Commerce Tbk (BBYB-IDX)	Indonesia	0.38	114.3

Data compiled Jan. 2, 2026. Source: S&P Global Market Intelligence. © 2026 S&P Global.

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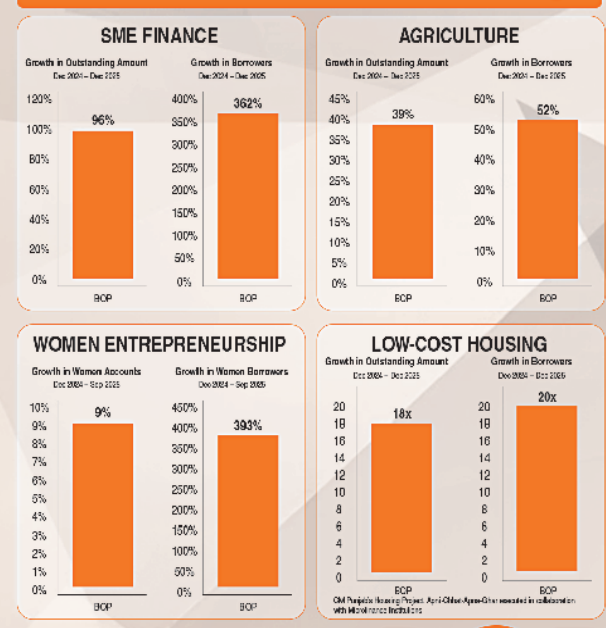

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